

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE

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EXDIS FOR AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR XF GW IS

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH LAHN ON MIDDLE EAST

1. FOLLOWING ARE MIDDLE EAST ISSUES AND TALKING POINTS
FOR YOUR USE IN YOUR CONVERSATION WITH LAHN ON MAY 6.

2. BACKGROUND

GERMAN POSITION

THE GERMANS, AS OTHER EUROPEANS, ARE BECOMING RESTIVE OVER
THE LACK OF PROGRESS IN THE PEACEMAKING PROCESS AND TO A
LESSER EXTENT ON THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE. THEY BELIEVE
THEY CAN PLAY A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN FACILITATING MOVEMENT
IN THE MIDDLE EAST THROUGH DIRECT INITIATIVES OR THROUGH
PARTICIPATING IN A EUROPEAN INITIATIVE. THEY ARE SUP-
PORTIVE OF ISRAEL AND U.S. POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST,
ALTHOUGH THERE IS AN INCREASING TENDENCY TOWARDS ARAB
POINTS OF VIEW. IN REGARD TO LEBANON, THE GERMANS
BELIEVE SYRIA IS A CONSTRUCTIVE FORCE AND PERHAPS THE ONLY

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COUNTRY THAT CAN REINSTITUTE SOME STABILITY.

3. U.S. POSITION

WE SEEK TO LIMIT ACTIVE EUROPEAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE PEACE PROCESS IN THE BELIEF THAT IT WOULD ONLY COMPLICATE AND ATTENUATE THE NEGOTIATIONS. THE MOST USEFUL ROLE GERMANS COULD PLAY, IN OUR OPINION, WOULD BE TO EMPHASIZE TO THE ARABS THAT THEY MUST CONTRIBUTE POSITIVELY TO A SOLUTION AND NOT MERELY SEEK POLITICAL "VICTORIES" AT THE EXPENSE OF REAL PROGRESS. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE IN REGARD TO THE FORTHCOMING DEBATE ON THE UNDOF RENEWAL. SYRIAN EFFORTS TO SEEK A POLITICAL PRICE FOR RENEWING UNDOF WOULD BE AT THE EXPENSE OF GENUINE PROSPECTS FOR PEACE. YOU MIGHT POINT OUT THAT PREMATURE ATTEMPTS TO INSERT THE PLO INTO THE PEACE PROCESS COULD ALIENATE ISRAEL FROM THAT PROCESS. EQUALLY, YOU MIGHT EXPRESS YOUR CONCERN ABOUT UNDULY COMPLICATING THE NEGOTIATIONS THROUGH INDEPENDENT EUROPEAN INITIATIVES, BUT SHARE AS WELL WITH THE GERMANS OUR CONCERNS AND CONVICTION THAT THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION NOT BE PERMITTED TO DRIFT.

4. TALKING POINTS

A. THE PEACE PROCESS

-- WE HAVE ENTERED A PERIOD OF CONSULTATIONS WITH THE PARTIES TO SEE WHETHER A NEGOTIATING PROCESS CAN BE LAUNCHED ON THE BASIS OF ISRAEL'S FEBRUARY 22 END-OF-WAR CONCEPT. THE LEBANESE CRISIS BECAME SO ACUTE IN LATE MARCH, HOWEVER, THAT IT HAS ALMOST TOTALLY PREOCCUPIED THE SYRIANS IN PARTICULAR TO THE EXCLUSION OF BROADER QUESTIONS AND WE HAVE SUSPENDED OUR CONSULTATIONS FOR THE TIME BEING. WE WILL PICK THEM UP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

-- ONE OF THE MERITS WE SEE IN THE FEBRUARY 22 FORMULA IS THAT END-OF-WAR NEGOTIATIONS COULD GRADUALLY LEAD INTO THE NEGOTIATION OF A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. IF ISRAEL AND THE ARABS CAN BE BROUGHT TO REACH AGREEMENT ON SUBSTANTIAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWALS IN RETURN FOR ARAB AGREEMENT

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TO END THE STATE OF WAR, THEY WILL BY THEN BE MOST OF THE WAY DOWN THE PATH TOWARD A FINAL SETTLEMENT AND MAY WELL MUSTER THE COURAGE TO GO THE LAST MILE.

-- WE HAVE EXAMINED OTHER OPTIONS--THE GOLAN NEGOTIATIONS, A JORDANIAN NEGOTIATION, AN ATTEMPT TO RECONVENE THE GENEVA CONFERENCE--AND HAVE CONCLUDED THAT EACH AT THIS POINT IS NOT VIABLE BECAUSE SOME ELEMENT NECESSARY

TO MAKE THE NEGOTIATION POSSIBLE IS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO ONE PARTY OR THE OTHER.

B. PALESTINIANS

-- WE RECOGNIZE THAT GERMANY AND EUROPE HAVE VERY MUCH AT STAKE IN THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF EFFORTS TO REVIVE THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT YOU ARE OFTEN PRESSED BY ONE OR ANOTHER ARAB GOVERNMENTS TO TAKE SOME INITIATIVE--IN PARTICULAR PERHAPS WITH RESPECT TO THE PLO.

-- IN OUR VIEW, POLITICAL GESTURES ON THE PART OF WESTERN GOVERNMENTS THAT ACKNOWLEDGE THE REALITY OF PALESTINIAN NATIONALISM MAY AT SOME POINT PROVE USEFUL FOR PROMOTING A MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT. HOWEVER, IF THEY ARE EXTENDED PREMATURELY, IN ADVANCE OF CHANGES IN THE UNREALISTIC OFFICIAL POSITION OF THE PLO RATHER THAN AS A RESULT OF SUCH CHANGES, THEIR EFFECT WILL BE HARMFUL. THEY WILL UNDERCUT U.S. EFFORTS TO MOVE ISRAEL TOWARD GREATER FLEXIBILITY AND COMPROMISE ON SETTLEMENT ISSUES.

-- WE FEEL THE MOST USEFUL RESPONSE TO SUCH ARAB QUESTIONS AND PRESSURES IS TO STRESS TO THE ARABS THAT WHILE EUROPE IS SYMPATHETIC TO THE PALESTINIANS AS IS THE U.S., THE PLO MUST ITSELF MAKE THE EFFORT TO BECOME A VIABLE NEGOTIATING PARTNER BY ACCEPTING EXPLICITLY WHAT ARAB GOVERNMENTS HAVE RECOGNIZED--ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST.

C. LEBANON

-- THE SITUATION IN LEBANON IS, AS YOU KNOW, EXTREMELY DELICATE. THE VIOLENCE CONTINUES AT A HIGH LEVEL, DESPITE THE EXISTENCE OF A CEASE-FIRE. TRUCES HAVE BECOME MERELY
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PERIODS OF REDUCED FIGHTING. EVEN THE INITIAL HURDLES ARE HARD TO OVERCOME. IT IS AT THIS POINT UNCERTAIN WHETHER THE PARLIAMENT WILL ELECT A NEW PRESIDENT ON SATURDAY AS SCHEDULED; THE LEBANESE LEFT PREVENTED PARLIAMENT FROM MEETING LAST WEEK, AND IT CAN DO SO AGAIN.

-- ELECTION OF A NEW PRESIDENT WILL BE MERELY THE FIRST STEP ON A LONG ROAD. TO BRING AN END TO THE FIGHTING, THE COUNTRY NEEDS AGREEMENT ON A BASIC POLITICAL COMPROMISE AND SOME MEANS OF REESTABLISHING SECURITY. THE PROBLEMS A NEW PRESIDENT WILL FACE ARE FORMIDABLE. SINCE THE LEBANESE ARMY DISINTEGRATED IN MARCH, HE WILL HAVE NO SIGNIFICANT FORCE UNDER HIS CONTROL ON WHICH TO RELY FOR

SECURITY. YET REESTABLISHING SECURITY WILL BE ESSENTIAL

TO IMPLEMENTING POLITICAL REFORMS AND MOVING THE COUNTRY TOWARD STABILITY.

-- IN FURTHERANCE OF OUR LONGSTANDING SUPPORT FOR LEBANESE STABILITY, INDEPENDENCE, AND UNITY, WE HAVE SUPPORTED A POLITICAL SOLUTION GIVING ADEQUATE OPPORTUNITY AND SECURITY TO ALL GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES IN LEBANON. WE HAVE PUBLICLY STATED OUR SUPPORT FOR THE COMPROMISE AGREEMENT WORKED OUT WITH CONSTRUCTIVE SYRIAN MEDIATION EARLIER THIS YEAR. THAT AGREEMENT, HOWEVER, WAS UNACCEPTABLE TO THE LEFT AND IS NOW IN LIMBO.

-- AS FOR SYRIA'S GOALS, AT THIS POINT THE SYRIANS SEEM TO BE CONCENTRATING ON THE NEED TO REESTABLISH SECURITY AND ORDER IN THE COUNTRY. WHILE THE SYRIANS OBVIOUSLY LIKE THE PROSPECT OF ENHANCED INFLUENCE IN LEBANON, THEY DO NOT SEEM TO SEEK TO TAKE LEBANON OVER OR TO TURN IT INTO A RADICAL CONFRONTATION STATE AGAINST ISRAEL. INSTEAD, THEY HAVE PARADOXICALLY ALIGNED THEMSELVES WITH THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT, APPARENTLY TO PRESERVE FOR THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN ANY FUTURE STABILIZED LEBANON THE MEANS TO PREVENT THE RADICALS FROM DOMINATING THE COUNTRY.

-- MUCH OF OUR ATTENTION HAS BEEN DEVOTED TO PREVENTING THE SITUATION FROM LEADING TO A LARGER CONFLICT INVOLVING SYRIA AND ISRAEL. WE HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN INTENSE CON-
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SULTATIONS WITH BOTH COUNTRIES. WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY WARNED BOTH COUNTRIES ABOUT THE RISKS OF MILITARY INTERVENTION. WE HAVE NOT, HOWEVER, BEEN A GO-BETWEEN IN ARRANGING ISRAELI ACQUIESCENCE IN THE SYRIAN INTERVENTION THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE. RATHER, THE SYRIANS SEEM TO HAVE KEPT THEIR MOVES RESTRAINED IN AN EFFORT TO AVOID AROUSING AN ISRAELI COUNTERACTION. HOWEVER, WHETHER FOR THAT REASON OR BECAUSE OF THE INTRACTABLE NATURE OF THE DIVISIONS IN LEBANON, THEY HAVE NOT BEEN EFFECTIVE IN STABILIZING THE SITUATION. IF POLITICAL PROGRESS IS NOT MADE IN LEBANON SOON, WE MAY BE HEADING FOR A NEW CRISIS POINT.

-- ANOTHER FACTOR INVOLVED IS THE SYRIAN INTERNAL SITUATION. ASAD MUST MOVE CAREFULLY ON THE LEBANESE ISSUE LEST HE INDIRECTLY STRENGTHEN HIS POTENTIAL DOMESTIC OPPOSITION IN THE BAATH PARTY AND THE ARMY.

D. EUROPEAN ROLE

-- WE RECOGNIZE GERMANY'S VERY CONSIDERABLE STAKE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND CAN UNDERSTAND THE IMPATIENCE OF EUROPEANS

WITH THE SLOWNESS OF THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS. WE TOO ARE IMPATIENT BUT ARE PROCEEDING AS FAST AS THE SITUATION WILL PERMIT.

-- WE SHARE YOUR CONCERN THAT THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION NOT BE PERMITTED TO DRIFT. WE FEEL THAT AT THIS JUNCTURE, THE GREATEST CONTRIBUTION WHICH CAN BE MADE TO THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS IS TO CONVINCE ARABS AND ISRAELIS OF OUR UNDERSTANDING FOR THEIR RESPECTIVE POSITIONS, BUT ALSO THAT THERE WILL BE INCREASING IMPATIENCE ABROAD TO ANY SIGNS OF IMMOBILITY OR TO ATTEMPTS AT ADVANCEMENT OF NARROW INTERESTS AT THE EXPENSE OF PROGRESS TOWARD A SETTLEMENT.
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